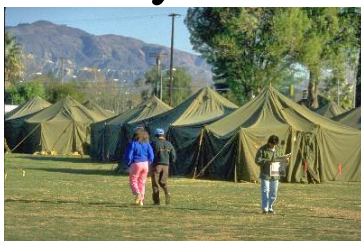# Safety Assessment Program

Disasters create terrible consequences, forcing people out of their homes into temporary shelters and closing down communities. While productive individuals sit idle in shelters, or even move away, local building inspectors struggle to evaluate building safety in hundreds or thousands of damaged structures.

Experience in dealing with earthquakes reveals that the number of total inspections due to non-structural damage can be *more than three times* the number of red-tagged and yellow-tagged buildings. Threats also exist from other natural and man-made disasters, including floods, hurricanes, and explosions. Most building departments do not have the ability to perform multitudes of such inspections in a short period of time, so a strong need exists to have a cadre of trained professionals available to assist local governments, along with a program to manage this cadre.

The California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA) Safety Assessment Program (SAP) provides experienced professionals who can quickly evaluate damaged structures, identifying those that are safe for occupancy to which people can return, while marking those that are unsafe or have restricted use. It accepts civil, structural, geotechnical, and architect licenses from any state, along with many ICC building inspector certifications. The program works in compliance with ICS, SEMS and NIMS, and has three trainings associated with it:

- **Evaluator Training** trains civil engineers, architects, and building inspectors to do field evaluations of buildings and other infrastructure for safety. This training is approved by the federal Department of Homeland Security for homeland security grant funding, and for CEUs through the California State University.
- **Coordinator Training** trains local government representatives on how to estimate the local needs for the Evaluators, how to request them, and how to manage them and the information they gather.
- **Evaluator Train-the-Trainer** certifies individuals to be official trainers for the program. There are currently over 200 SAP trainers distributed in several states, among them Florida, Maryland, Illinois, Massachusetts, Colorado, and California.

SAP has been used successfully in responding to disasters, such as the Northridge, Napa, and San Simeon earthquakes in California, as well as in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Cal EMA SAP evaluators were sent to Louisiana and Mississippi to assist in building safety evaluation under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

More information on the Safety Assessment Program can be found at its robust website. Go to www.calema.ca.gov, select the "Recovery" heading, then the "Safety Assessment Program" link. The site contains upcoming classes, a list of trainers, downloadable manuals, and other information. You may also contact Jim C. Barnes, P.E., Associate Civil Engineer, at (916) 845-8273, or by email at Jim.Barnes@calema.ca.gov.